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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000482

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [XF](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AL-MALIKI SPEECH: EVERYBODY WAGERS ON THE IRAQI
EXPERIMENT

REF: FBIS GMP200702066490002

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Khalilzad for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Al-Maliki's February 6 speech to his military commanders transcended his normal pedestrian approach to public remarks and reflected what appears to be a significant evolution in his assessment of the problems facing Iraq. He stressed to his commanders their professional obligations, warned against political interference, took Iraq's neighbors to task, and reiterated his desire for Iraq to stand on its own, while acknowledging positively the assistance received from "friends." A political advisor assured us that Maliki wrote the speech himself. End summary.

¶2. (U) On February 6, PM Al-Maliki addressed his military commanders in anticipation of the launch of the new Baghdad Security Plan. The speech was carried live on Al-Iraqiyah TV (ref).

BROAD PICTURE OF THE THREAT TO IRAQ

¶3. (SBU) The February 6 address differs from others on the same theme by the Prime Minister, in that the PM has moved away from his previous mantra of blaming "terrorists, takfiris and Saddamists" alone for Iraq's troubles. PM Maliki repeatedly stressed that sectarian and ethnic "sedition" -- in addition to terrorism and rebellion -- challenged the future of Iraq. "The will of the ignorant terrorists the will of gangs, the will of militias, and the will of all outlaws, and the will of those who do not wish Iraq to enjoy freedom, plurality, democracy, justice and equality will prevail if the will of the Iraqis of those of Iraqi politicians are broken."

ADDRESSING THE NEIGHBORS

¶4. (SBU) Maliki took broad aim at most of Iraq's neighbors, devoting a good portion of the speech to those who are "interfering in our affairs and supporting terrorism." He accused the neighbors of failing to support Iraq's democratic experiment because of their own fear of democracy. "Our brothers, friends, and neighboring countries should have rejoiced at the abolishment of dictatorship in Iraq, but regrettably, it seems that dictatorship is the main characteristic in this region," he stated. "They fear that freedom and democracy will spread to their countries, and they have the right to fear because they are an original copy of the dictatorship that ruled Iraq," he asserted.

GOAL: END IRAQI DEPENDENCE

¶5. (SBU) Maliki acknowledged the support that Iraq does receive from "those that love us and cooperate with us." "Although we depended on the friends' support for our security march, we have to end this dependence and to rely on ourselves because Iraqi is for us, because the people are our people, and because we have become vital part of the conflict between good and evil and between justice and injustice." He reiterated his confidence in the the strength and honor of the Iraqi security forces.

A PROFESSIONAL ARMY

¶6. (SBU) The Prime Minister addressed previous complaints by opposition leaders of political interference in military operations by giving the assembled officers clear instructions "to carry out your military orders professionally and not listen to any politician." "We ask military personnel not to respond to any invitation to meet any politician," he added.

¶7. (SBU) Acknowledging the sectarian reality of the armed forces, the Prime Minister challenged the officers to avoid favoritism when they enter same-sect neighborhoods. He asserted that "we will deal with such a phenomenon in the field, and we will not allow anybody to be a cover for rebels belonging to a certain identity."

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COMMENT

¶8. (C) The speech was perhaps the best Maliki has given to date. Typically uncharismatic in tone, in this address Maliki not only reflected a new, improved vision but also echoed an evolution in his conviction regarding the need for even-handed approach to violence. One of his senior advisors confirmed to us that he wrote the speech himself.
SPECKHARD